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THE AMATEUR'S CHOICE OF SUBJECT

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Gordon S. Malthouse
Editor

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LAST month, it may be remembered, we discussed certain standards of values applying to the appraisal of amateur films, the subject having arisen through a marked divergence of opinion apparent in the findings of Scottish Film Festival judges and those of *Amateur Cine World* on the same films. In presenting our own point of view we were at some pains to emphasise that those who differ from it were perfectly entitled to their opinion, that neither our viewpoint nor theirs could be said to be right or wrong, for we were dealing not with facts but with interpretations of them.

It is, however, gratifying to receive support from an unexpected quarter: from a reader who was awarded a prize in the Festival for a film which he describes as the least worthy that he has made. Certainly other films of his which we have seen we liked much better. But, at the risk of appearing to belabour the point, may we repeat that the judges doubtless had good and substantial reasons for giving a prize for this particular film? There are no defendants in this friendly 'court of enquiry.'

"Most Rewarding Field"

It would seem from their awards that the Scottish authorities take more note of photography and theme than we do, judging them to be more important than balance and construction. We have already discussed the value we ourselves put upon camerawork; it remains to deal with the importance of theme in relation to the whole film.

"Non-fiction," say the Festival adjudicators, "is the most rewarding field for the amateur. Here the amateur can do things which the professional cannot. He has local knowledge and local facilities and he can turn these to account. When the days of peace return a film record of climbing in Arran, the Cullins, Glencoe and on Ben Nevis might be made by amateurs, assisted—if they might be induced to descend from their Olympus—by members of the mountaineering clubs.

"An enterprising group might take tents and a pony and vanish for a week in June into the fastnesses of the Cairngorms and their adjacent forests, shooting scenery and wild life, producing a screen equivalent of the writings, say, of Seton Gordon. There is scope also for surveys of towns like St. Andrews and Perth, and for county histories.

The subjects, indeed, that awaited the roving camera of the amateur are legion. Some amateur, for instance, may suddenly wake up to the fact that there is a grand subject in the romance of the Scottish light-houses. And who will be the first to film the forbidden and unvisited island of Rum?"

Now these are all excellent suggestions, except that, if the island of Rum is indeed forbidden (and not merely forbidding), we have no interest in who shall be the first to film it; we only know that we shall be among the last.

For our own part, however, we view with

some misgiving the statement that it is in the non-fiction field that the amateur can do things which the professional cannot. It is, in the main, perfectly correct, but it cannot be accepted entirely without question. The fact that a professional cannot or will not produce a film on a certain theme is, of course, no sure indication that the amateur can and should.

Let us for a moment forget about our much vaunted freedom (which, if we accept it too literally often devolves into the freedom to make a mess of things) and consider for a moment the aim of amateur and professional alike. It is to entertain, with instruction limping along a bad second. The nature and degree of the entertainment depend largely on the audiences for which it is designed.

A critic cannot arrogate to himself the role of dispenser and arbiter of public taste. He can only examine why a film entertains or displeases him, why it instructs or fails to instruct. He is entitled to proclaim that he personally prefers films of an instructional nature and deprecates the spate of indifferent entertainment films; he may, through the following he is able to command, influence the production of more and better instructional films. He may applaud the choice of solid, sensible subjects such as those outlined above but he must allow the validity of other opinions.

For some people, the filming of decaying arts and crafts represents the very ecstasy of achievement, but the sniff of decay may sicken the next man. You do not see them often on the public screen because the general public does not want them. The professional has to give the public what it wants. Why should the amateur film, which is just as universal a medium, be expected to serve only the minority?

Please Yourself

The amateur has every right to give his own limited public (which is himself and friends) what it wants; in *Amateur Cine World* competitions we try to recognise that right. We do not look on the amateur movie-maker as a Man with a Mission. We do not ask him to instruct us, to film the marvels of the present and the conceits of the past. We do not expect him to strike out on paths ignored by the professional, although we welcome his enterprise when he does.

In competitions we demand enterprise in whatever he undertakes: whether it be a family film or a documentary film; his entire freedom of choice does not give the amateur *carte-blanc* to get away with poor, unoriginal treatment. His family film must be a film, with a beginning and an end, properly arranged sequences, significant shots. If it fails, it fails not because of the subject, but the treatment. And after all, what more fruitful subject is there than your own family?

THE EDITOR.



Note how distance is suggested by receding heights of the trees and the cow in the middle distance—a distance which we are able to gauge by the foreground tree and cow.

MANY of us may have read in reviews of prize-winning colour films how striking were some of the colour effects achieved, and we have probably wondered how those effects were obtained, for it seemed to us that all we could hope to do was to get the right exposure and record the scene as naturally as possible.

Kodachrome film and the processing have been considerably improved since its inception. The earlier uncertainties have disappeared, so that anyone who is prepared to exercise a reasonable degree of care can film with the assurance that the results will be a faithful reproduction of the scenes in front of the camera. But these results, though true, may not always be entirely pleasing, due mostly to the fact that the scene has not been chosen with a view to securing colour harmony. It is not enough merely to record without thought of the place of the shot in the film.

Before passing on to a consideration of colour harmony and balance, however, it will perhaps be as well if we examine the basic factors which make for success with straightforward Kodachrome filming.

Exposure

The most important factor is the question of exposure. With black-and-white film a certain amount of compensation in processing can be given to correct over- or under-exposure, but with Kodachrome film this compensation is not possible, with the result that the margin of error in exposure is necessarily smaller.

In a general way the table of exposures for different light and subject conditions sent out with the film will provide a very useful guide as to the correct stop to use, but for really consistent results an exposure meter is essential. Exposure meters fall broadly into two groups: those which depend on a measurement of the light reflected from the subject, and those which rely on a measurement of the incident light itself. Opinions differ

PAINTING

The author, who has had much success with his colour films ("Man on the Road," among others, will be remembered), describes how to suggest mood and create atmosphere in colour films—in short, how to achieve colour harmony rather than a mere record. He also gives some very useful advice, based on his own experience, on estimating exposure.

as to which is the more suitable type for colour work, but with an experience of both my choice is for the high-light meter, with certain modifications for subject matter and lighting conditions.

The method I adopt is to take the normal high-light reading—that is, a reading on the brightest light shining on the scene. This forms the basic exposure. The scene is now examined for two considerations, firstly the direction of the incident light, and secondly the colours which compose the scene.

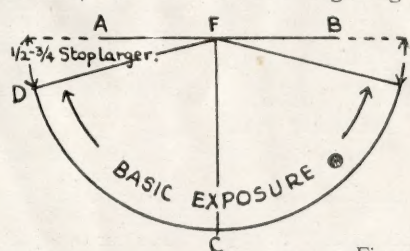
When the sun is not actually shining, or is diffused sufficiently with light cloud to cut out definite shadows, the basic high-light reading is given for all subjects of average colour. When the scene contains a preponderance of light colours the lens is stopped down $\frac{1}{2}$ stop on the basic exposure, e.g., basic exposure f/5.6, camera exposure for light colours f/6.3. Similarly the lens is opened up $\frac{1}{2}$ stop for a preponderance of dark colours.

Calculating Exposure

Actually these conditions of no sun or hazy sun are the simplest and easiest for calculating the exposure for Kodachrome. With the absence of shadows one can often be a stop out from the correct exposure and still obtain pleasing results. On the other hand, when the sun is shining the exposure is more critical. Under these conditions the same variation of $\frac{1}{2}$ stop up or down is made for a preponderance of light or dark colours, but, in addition, the angle at which the sun is shining on the scene must be considered, and further variations made under certain conditions. These conditions can best be explained by reference to Fig. 1.

A-B represents the limits of the subject field, C the camera. C-F is an imaginary line drawn from the camera to the centre of the subject. D-F and E-F form 60 degree angles to the camera axis. Now if the sun is in any position between the segment D-C-E, the basic exposure is given subject to the variation for light or dark colours. If the angle of the sun is over 60 degrees, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ stop larger than the basic exposure is given until the angle of 90 degrees is reached.

Flat lighting has long been recommended for Kodachrome, and this form of lighting certainly makes the



judging of the exposure simpler, but my experience is that if the correct stop is used, cross or side lighting or even back lighting can provide some of the most pleasing

Fig. 1.

with COLOUR FILM

By
JOHN MARTIN

effects with colour. The reason for this will be explained later when dealing with colour balance.

Back lighting in particular can provide some extremely striking shots, but everything here depends on choosing exactly the right stop. My method is first to take a reading on the sun and then face about and take a shade reading, i.e., stand in the subject position and point the meter back at the sky in the direction of the camera. The difference between the two readings is very often anything from 1 to 4 stops, perhaps sun reading f/8, shade reading f/1.9.

The film is not able to record accurately a contrast range as great as this. If we film at f/8 the sunlit portions will be correctly exposed, but the remainder of the scene will be a mass of inky blueness. On the other hand, filming at f/1.9 will give correct colours for the shadows, but the sunlit portions will be completely "burnt out." The problem is to know which stop between these two will give the most pleasing compromise. This will depend to some extent on the subject and its colour and the effect desired, but the following table, based on practical tests, may be used as a guide as it gives the most pleasing results for average scenes :—

Variation between the
two readings

Camera stop to use

4 stops	2½ stops larger than sun reading
3 stops	2 stops " " " "
2 stops	1½ stops " " " "
1 stop	Sun reading

It should be pointed out that in filming against the light one should choose a viewpoint that cuts out the sky. The relative contrast between the sky in these shots and the rest of the picture is extremely high, with the result that the sky is bound to be so much over-exposed that all colour will be lost in that portion. This bright area of black celluloid creates a very disturbing glare, so it is better to exclude the sky altogether.

The other factor which affects the colour rendition is the actual colour of the light at the time the exposure is made. Kodachrome film is balanced for use between the hours of 9 and 4. Outside of these hours the sun penetrates more haze, with the result that sunlight tends

While foreground interest invariably assists composition, it is in this shot too centrally placed, so that the boy receives undue prominence at the expense of the scene.

more and more to the yellow and red end of the spectrum. This yellow light falling on to a scene naturally alters all the colours, although the change may not be apparent to an untrained eye ; the film nevertheless records it, with the result that the whole scene takes on a warmer colouring. In other words the film is still recording the scene accurately, but perhaps not quite as we imagine we see it.

However, do not be afraid of tackling subjects outside the hours of 9 and 4—some of the most beautiful effects can be obtained in the early morning and late afternoon—but be prepared for warmer colours. It is possible to correct this warmth by using a pale blue filter such as the Wratten 80, which with an allowance of ½ stop will bring the colour rendering back to that of the midday hours, but as the general use of this filter has not been recommended by the film makers, one should use it in an experimental way.

Matching Shots

This warmth of image will be more noticeable to an audience if for any reason these shots have to be intercut with others taken on a dull day, when the light tends towards blue. It is advisable, therefore, to take all shots which require intercutting under similar lighting conditions.

Staining the film very lightly with dyes (the bluish film with yellow and the warm film with blue) will tend to even up the colour balance, but as this is also not recommended by the makers, one should only use it as a last resort, though personally I have found it very useful for matching shots. This matching of colours in succeeding shots is one of the most difficult phases of colour work. Where the construction of the film will allow one will naturally keep shots of similar colouring together ; where this is not possible, a third shot intermediate in colour between the two can often be used to bridge the gap.

(Continued on next page)



PAINTING

with Colour Film

(Continued from previous page)

Failing this we might introduce a quick artificial fade-out and fade-in by means of one of the fading solutions, and this momentary blackening of the screen between the two shots will help to break the colour contrast between the two shots.

With the exception of the haze filter for cutting down the excess of blue in a distant scene, filters have not been recommended for Kodachrome, but there are certain filters which can be extremely useful for special effects. A polarising filter which is normally used in black and white work to cut out unwanted reflections can be very usefully employed with Kodachrome to keep a sky dark. This is often advantageous if we wish to simulate a night scene, especially if used in conjunction with a blue filter without any increase of the normal exposure; the results will give the bluish colour associated with a night scene and the sky being dark will enhance the effect.

It is well-known that certain colours are associated with and suggest certain moods—blue suggests coldness, yellow warmth—and we can, if the occasion arises, suggest these moods and create atmosphere by using very pale filters, which will give a delicate tint to the picture without entirely destroying the natural colour values.

It must be pointed out, however, that the normal yellow, green and red filters which are used in black and white work are not suitable for this as they are much too deep. The filters available in the Wratten series, however, obtainable from Kodak in gelatine form, are suitable for experiments. The most useful are No. 78C (blue), No. 51 (green), No. 85 (red), No. 86C (yellow), and since they are extremely pale the increase in exposure necessary is only about $\frac{1}{2}$ stop. A few experimental shots with these filters will soon show the effects possible.

If we examine some of our Kodachrome films we shall

This shot suggests a useful continuity device. Begin with a close shot of footprints in the sand, then rapidly tilt the camera to show the person making them.



find that certain shots appear much more pleasing than others, despite the fact that all are correctly exposed, and whilst we may not be able to analyse our feelings for liking a particular shot it will invariably be due to the fact that there is better colour harmony and balance.

An artist setting out to paint a scene can alter and adapt the colours to suit his own particular views and ideas. He can suppress or accentuate to achieve this colour balance and harmony. But the lens of the cine camera blindly and faithfully records all in front of it. The only control available must come from the choice of viewpoint and the selection of subject and lighting, but these are powerful factors if we have some idea of what constitutes colour harmony.

Two Groups of Colours

An artist will tell you that colour is a lifetime study, which undoubtedly it is, and as such cannot be dealt with comprehensively in the scope of this article, but most of us have a colour sense, which we exercise consciously or unconsciously. Very few ladies would choose a green hat to wear with a bright blue costume, simply because they don't "go together."

Broadly speaking, colours can be divided into two classes—cool colours like blues and greens, and warm colours like reds and yellows. Warm colours attract our attention first, so should be used as accents against the colder colours. Try and avoid a scene with all warm colours as the effect would be glaring. Similarly all cool colours without the relief of a warm colour will seldom produce a colour balance that is satisfactory.

A landscape, for instance, composed of all the cool colours (greens and blues) will be much improved by a touch of warm colour, which might conveniently be

afforded by a red cow in the foreground, or a lady in a yellow dress in the near mid-distance—just a note or accent, occupying a relatively small area, yet powerful enough to strike a colour balance. Similarly an autumn scene composed of warm reds and browns needs a touch of blue or green to complete the colour harmony.

Although flat lighting has been recommended for Kodachrome, presumably because it is easier to keep within the contrast range of the film, it has a tendency to produce colour pictures composed of all warm colours or all cool ones, with the result that the colour balance is unsatisfactory. On the other hand, side-lighting or back-lighting, by producing areas of shadow, give us the cool colours, while the necessary warm accent is provided by the

(Continued on page 151)

Making the Best Use of YOUR LENSES



Last month our contributor dealt with simple theory, explaining how the lens (the eye of the camera) functions. In this article he translates theory into practice.

By

ALEX STRASSER
F.R.P.S.

IN the previous article it was explained that camera lenses differ as regards their focal length, aperture and optical quality. We will now see how the various properties of the lenses affect the work with the camera, and how we can use these properties to our best advantage.

The Fixed-Focus Lens

The simplest lens to deal with is the "fixed-focus." The name indicates that the focus of this lens cannot be altered, and it is fixed on a distance which secures both a near foreground and a distant background in focus. As explained previously, it is a fortunate circumstance that the normal cine lens has a rather short focus and therefore produces a big area of sharpness, thus making it possible to dispense with individual focussing as far as general work is concerned.

The fixed-focus is doubtless a very convenient lens for all the more obvious uses of cine work. It does away with all problems of focussing and is almost foolproof as regards the sharpness of the picture. For the amateur who likes things to be easy and simple it is the ideal lens, although its scope may be too restricted for the more ambitious filmer.

The fixed-focus lenses of 8mm. cameras are usually of 12-13mm. focal length, those of 16mm. cameras of 20-25mm. focal length. They mostly have a full aperture of $f/3.5$. At this aperture everything beyond 5-6 ft. is sharp, but stopping down will increase the sharp area considerably towards the foreground. Diagrams 1 and 2 show the nearest sharp points at the various lens stops.

If we wish to take close-up shots of objects still nearer to the camera we must use a supplementary lens, which we attach to the front of the camera lens. These supplementary lenses make the focal length of the camera lens longer and are suitable for shots of small animals, plants and specially for portraits, and are therefore often called "portrait attachments." The depth of focus of these auxiliary lenses is very small and the object must therefore not be allowed to move or it will quickly be out of focus.

The Focussing Mount

Superior to the "fixed-focus" is the lens with the focussing mount. A revolving ring makes it possible to set the focus to various distances which are marked on a scale engraved on the mount. A focussing mount is indispensable in the case of long-focus lenses which do not have a very large depth of focus, and they are also necessary for the standard lenses with full aperture larger than $f/3.5$. At $f/1.9$, for instance, the nearest sharp point of a fixed-focus lens would be more than 10 ft. away, and close-up shots or portraits would be impossible if, say, weak artificial light would make it necessary to use the full aperture.

In more ambitious camera work it is often desirable not to have the whole picture dead sharp. The portrait of a person will appear much more outstanding if the head is placed against an unsharp background. In professional films the cameramen always try to separate the object supposed to be the centre of interest from the unimportant details by showing it sharp in blurred surroundings. This can be achieved by using a large aperture.

We may compare this method with the retouching work of the still portraitist. This form of "optical retouching" is the only means of retouching possible in cine photography.

Correct focussing, as we have learned, is necessary if we (a) employ a large aperture; (b) use a long-focus lens; or (c) focus on a near distance. An optical distance meter is ideal for measuring distances correctly; short distances should be measured with a tape measure.

The next thing to do is to consider what depth of focus we want, and to set distance and lens stop levers (or rings) against the appropriate marks on the scale.

We must, of course, focus on a different distance, and choose a different lens stop if we want the sharp area to extend from 3 ft. to infinity than if we wish an area from 2-5 ft. from the camera to be in focus. A quick method of deciding which lens stop to use for a given sharp area, or to know at what distance to focus, or which depth of focus area can be obtained with a given lens stop, is to make use of the depth of focus tables on page 152.

These tables, like most tables and formulae, may at a first glance look rather frightening, but they are actually very simple to read and understand. If we keep these tables in the camera case they will always be at hand when required.

Interchangeable Lenses

Many camera lenses are adapted for the use of more than one lens. The additional lenses can quickly be changed by means of an adapter or a turret carrying 2-3 lenses.

A lens set which will make it possible to undertake almost every type of work would probably consist of a wide-angle lens, a normal lens, a long-focus lens and a telephoto lens. The uses of these lenses are mainly determined by their fields of vision.

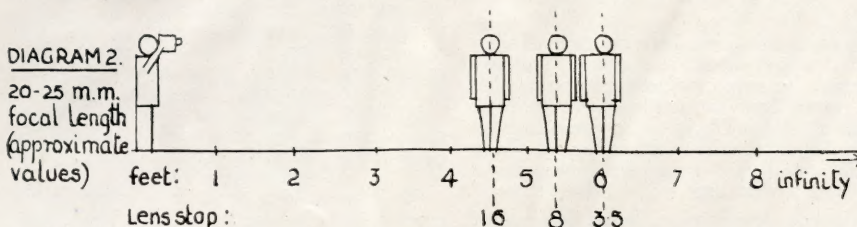
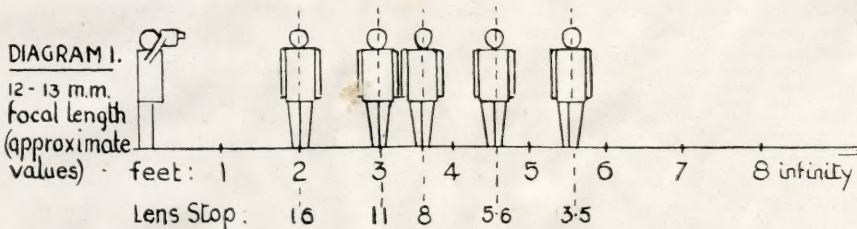
In the previous article it was stated that the shorter the focus of a lens the bigger its angle of view, and *vice versa*. It follows that the bigger the angle of view the more extended is the view itself and the smaller are the single details in the pictures. The same applies the other way round. For instance, it is only possible to take close-ups with a short-focus lens from a very short distance. The diagram on next page proves this clearly. The head of a person fills the screen when taken from the following distances.

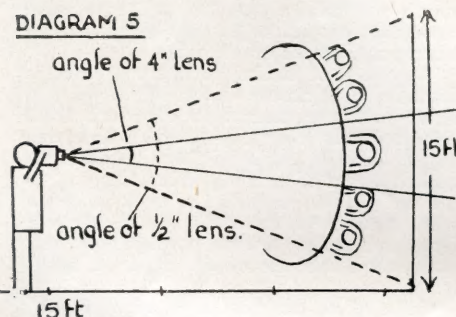
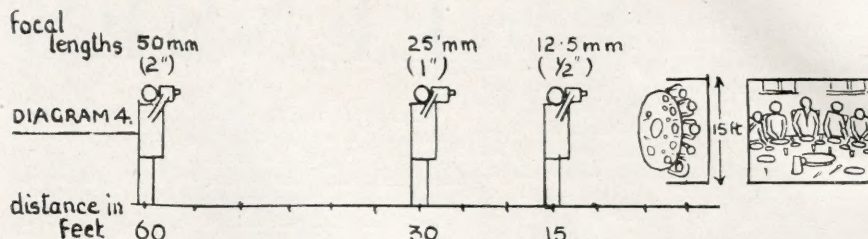
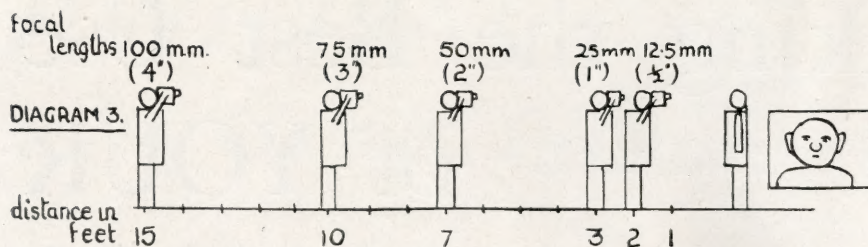
On the other hand, a scene or set 15 ft. wide and 10 ft. high would necessitate the camera distances given in Figs. 3 and 4.

If we combine these two diagrams we see that from the same distance of, say, 15 ft., a 4 in. lens only shows the head of a person, while a 12.5mm. lens includes the whole width of the room. (Fig. 5).

Generally speaking, we need a short-focus (wide-angle) lens, if we want to include

(Continued on next page)

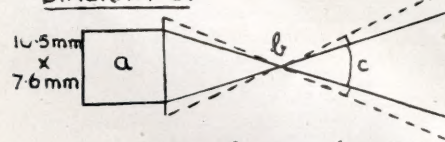




a large field of vision from a short distance, and we want a long-focus lens if we wish distant objects to appear large on the screen.

It is essential to remember that the expressions "short-focus" and "long-focus" are not values in themselves, but have a proper meaning only in conjunction with the negative size. A 12.5mm. lens mounted on a 16mm. camera is to be regarded as a short-focus (wide-angle) lens.

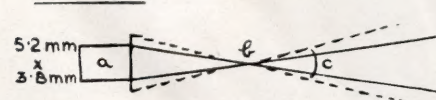
DIAGRAM 6.



- a. original size of 16 mm frame.
- b. focus 12.5 mm.
- c. angle of view.

On an 8mm. camera the same lens would be a normal one.

DIAGRAM 7.



- a. original size of 8mm frame
- b. focus 12.5 mm
- c. angle of view.

Diagrams 3—5 apply to 16mm. cameras ; the distances must be doubled for use of 8mm. cameras.

Let us now consider the various types of lenses.

Short-focus (wide-angle) lenses are those having an angle of more than 30 degrees. They are specially useful in architectural and industrial work where we often have to take shots in restricted space, such as the interiors of rooms, narrow staircases or offices, machinery from a nearby standpoint, or the fronts of buildings from the opposite sides of narrow streets. When shooting photoplays we can tackle scenes which take place in small rooms.

The great depth of focus of these lenses makes them the most suitable ones for tracking shots, avoiding the rather awkward necessity of "following focus" (we will discuss this in a future article). These lenses also allow of amusing pictorial effects ; when shots are taken at very close quarters the perspective will be much exaggerated ; a dog, taken from the front, will have an enormous head, or a lying person enormous feet.

Standard lenses have an angle of view of approximately 25 degrees. These are used for general purposes.

Useful for Portraits

Long-focus lenses, with an angle of view of 15-20 degrees, are very useful for portraits, specially for large heads. It is sometimes awkward if we have to draw very near to a person when filming him ; we are often in the way of the lights, and the model may feel embarrassed. Long-focus lenses permit us to take portraits from a reasonable distance ; they are naturally also suitable for all other close-up shots. As mentioned before, their restricted depth of focus makes it possible to divide a picture into a sharp and an unsharp area, thus giving greater emphasis to the centre of interest.

Telephoto cine-lenses have an angle of view which does not exceed 10 degrees. They are necessary for many purposes in conjunction with research and nature films, when intimate details of wild life have to be observed from great distances, tiny animals made clearly visible, or distant mountain peaks, ships, details of a coast line, etc., "brought near."

Telephoto lenses must always be focussed very accurately and the camera placed on a

tripod in order to avoid camera shake, which would result in the projected picture being unsteady.

One of the greatest boons of a set of interchangeable lenses is undoubtedly the possibility to change quickly from long-shots to medium-shots and close-ups without the necessity of moving the camera forward and backward. This is most appreciated in work of topical news-reel character, or if photoplays or model films are being produced.

'Magic Tracking Shot'

Zoom lenses. Brief mention must be made of this type of lens which combines the features of a standard and a long-focus lens. The focal length of such a lens can be altered at will, even during actual shooting. The effect, often seen on the professional screen, is that of a somewhat magic tracking shot. The camera often appears to sail through the air towards a distant object until it is close to it. In such a case the camera was placed on a roof top, church spire or hill top.

In sub-standard cinematography I know of only two such models : the "Transfocator" and the "Various-Glaukar," both German makes and not now available.

A somewhat similar, if not quite so remarkable, effect can be obtained by using a wide-angle lens and tracking the camera towards the object in question, thus transforming the picture from a distant view to, say, a close-up of a person in one single "breath" without cut or dissolve.

Viewfinder. Special viewfinders are necessary for each focal length. They are either built-in in the camera or can be had separately and attached to the outside of the camera. The various models differ considerably as regards their methods of working (most of them providing for a magnifying effect), but the principle is always the same : to show the view exactly as it will later appear on the screen.

At very short distances (up to 6-8 ft.) the view of the viewfinder does not exactly coincide with that of the lens, and we must allow for this fact by faintly lifting the camera or swinging it slightly away from our object so that the latter appears a bit too low or at the side of the viewfinder. Some instruments have mechanical gadgets by means of which the necessary corrections can be made.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The foregoing notes cover, I believe, the main points connected with focal length and focussing. Here are a few more questions for you to solve, and the answers will be given in the next issue.

- (1) Can close-up shots be taken with a fixed-focus lens, and if so, how ?
- (2) Can a 25mm. lens be used on an 8mm. camera, and what would be the effect ?
- (3) What are the depth of focus areas in the following circumstances :
12.5mm. lens, stop 8, distance set at 6 ft.,
25mm. lens, stop 1.9, distance set at 2 ft.,
50mm. lens, stop 16, distance set at 10 ft. ?
(Consult tables Nos. 1-3)
- (4) How far have you to stop down a 20mm. lens if you wish the sharp area to reach from 6 ft. to infinity ?
(Consult table No. 5)
- (5) When taking shots in a rather small room, would you use a normal, a long-focus or a wide-angle lens ?

(See also page 152)



Fig. 1.

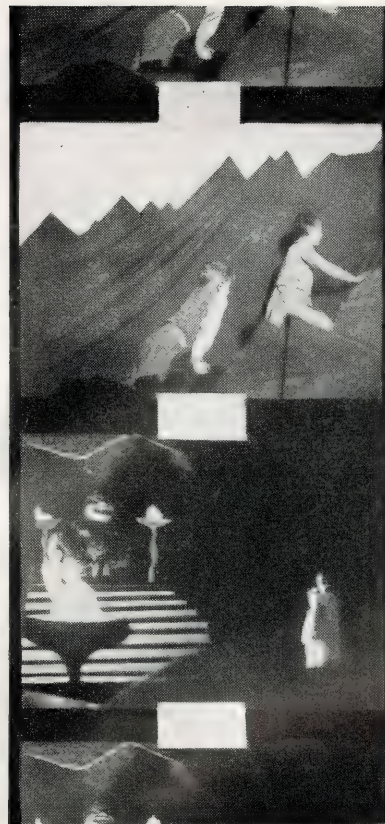


Fig. 2.

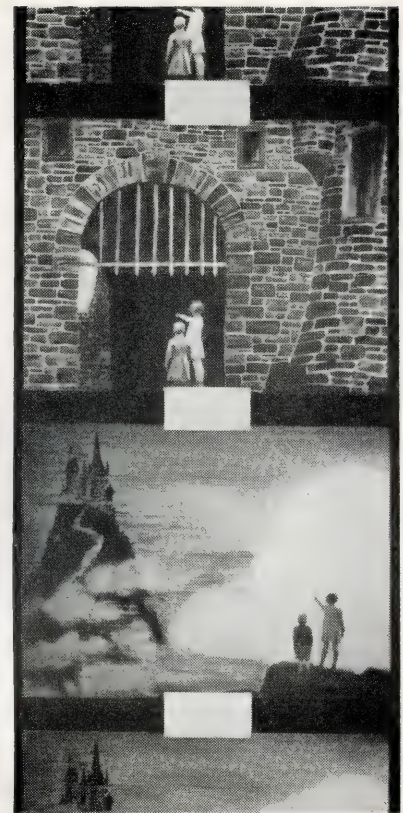


Fig. 3.

YOU can produce TRICK EFFECTS like these

WE must all have had our exasperating moments when we have sighed for the resources of the modern movie studio. Perhaps the shot of the smuggler's cave in our holiday film has gone wrong and cannot be replaced; or we may long to indulge in flights of fancy and build wonderful sets of the Giant's Castle or the Fairy Queen's Palace. To those who have read the articles and taken the trouble to make the "stage," we hope to show, by a few examples, that these ambitions are not altogether beyond reach.

The use of a simple silhouette mask is shown in the upper frame of Fig. 1. The jagged mask is cut from cardboard and set up on Stage C. Unwanted light is excluded by wrapping the framing of the "Stage" with black cloth. The "Stage" is then set up and the scene surveyed through the sight. The actors are rehearsed and matters so arranged that they can run right up to the camera without being cut off by the mask. If the apparatus can be set up alongside a wall or a screen rigged up so that when the actors approach to within about fifteen feet they pass into shadow, the effect on the screen will be that they appear to run into the cave.

This principle is elaborated in the lower frame, Fig. 1. A silhouette mask of "dense undergrowth" is cut from cardboard and set up on Stage B, light being excluded as before.

"Palm trees," etc., are added and set up between Stages B and C, light being permitted to reach these masks, so giving depth to the scene. A low camera position gives a sky background and the "sea" is simply a roll of brown paper stretched across the picture some fifteen feet away. Alternatively, a jagged top edge to the paper and a few dabs of paint to represent distant mountains would turn our "South Sea Island" into "The Edge of the Desert." The location must be chosen so that there is no danger of a shadow being cast by the actor on the brown paper background.

Use of Neutral Background

The use of a simple, neutral background is shown in the upper frame of Fig. 2. Our black backcloth is hung up and draped over the household step ladders and a few boxes. The "sky" and foreground "rocks" are cut from paper and fixed up on Stage C. "Mist" can be added by boiling a kettle on the holiday Primus and letting the steam blow out of the spout a couple of feet ahead of the camera lens. Do not forget that you can make your actors climb impossible precipices by turning

This is the fifth article in the series on producing trick effects with simple apparatus. The author uses a Dekko camera.

the camera or "Stage" on its side and photographing the actors crawling horizontally on their tummies over the "rocks."

The lower frame of Fig. 2 introduces double exposure. The black backcloth is set up and the picture area restricted to the required limits by a high diffusion mask in Stage A. This brings the area of the backcloth down to a reasonable size. The foreground "rocks" etc., are set up on Stage C and exposure made on the actors, the limits of their movement having been previously fixed by direct observation. The film is rewound, the focus adjusted and the second exposure made on the model set, illuminated in this case by artificial light to obtain the effect required. The space occupied by the actors is in deep shadow so that the first exposure is unaffected.

Use is again made of the black backcloth in the upper frame of Fig. 3, but in this case the model set forms a mask as well. The

(Continued on next page)

By
G. A. GAULD, B.Sc.

castle walls are painted in black "poster" colour on stiff drawing paper and the archway is cut out. The paper is pinned to Stage C and the frame covered to exclude the light. The apparatus is then set up, the opening formed by the cut-out arch being directed to include the area occupied by the black backcloth. After the usual rehearsal, the first exposure is made, the actors walking towards the backcloth and off to the side until they disappear behind the limits of the opening in the mask. The cover is removed and the set on Stage C illuminated; the focus is adjusted and a second exposure made. The actors will appear to walk through the archway.

Home-Made Rocks

The lower frame of Fig. 3 makes use of a white, neutral background. A high diffusion mask with a cloud shaped opening is fitted into Stage A. Full size "rocks" are made by draping the black cloth over a few boxes and the "Stage" is set up to include these in the lower portion of the opening in the mask. The remainder of the background may be sky or a white backcloth. The children climb up over the "rocks" and drop down out of sight on the far side, keeping within the limits of the opening in the mask. The reverse mask is then inserted in Stage A, and, after adjusting for focus, the second exposure showing the Fairy Castle (painted on drawing paper and fixed to Stage C) is made.

The "Aeroplane" shot in Fig. 4 is a special application of the foreground model. It occurs in a film of fantasy in which the smaller members of the family climb aboard a toy aeroplane and are pursued by goblins mounted astride some obliging bumble bees. Cross cutting from pursuer to pursued builds up the excitement in the traditional manner of the film chase.

Making the Plane Bank

In this case, a pair of wooden rockers were fitted to the frame of the "Stage" and the apparatus set up on a table. The "pursuit planes" were pasted on to a glass plate mounted in Stage B and the aeroplane foreground model fixed up in a frame on the table just clear of Stage C. The "Airman" stood on the seat of a chair, gripping the back with his hands, his head apparently above the cockpit. The background may be either the sky or a white backcloth. A normal exposure was made but at the same time the "Stage" was rocked slightly. This results in the aeroplane banking in a realistic manner. The pursuit planes being in a fixed position in relation to the camera obviously maintain their position in the background. Rocking the camera avoids complication of the model and the actor can stay in the required position without difficulty.

As we pointed out in the previous article, these trick shots should be short and well mixed in with straight shots otherwise the trickery may become too obvious. The conclusion of this film may serve to illustrate the point.

Parachute Jump

The climax is reached when the petrol gives out and the children decide to jump for it in their parachutes. A very simple set knocked up in ply-wood showing a bit of fuselage and a cockpit broadside on was fixed up on a table with the sky for the background. The children climb out of the cockpit and

jump. The children were then suspended in turn from a harness made of clothes-line slung up in the garage doorway. Shooting from inside, again with a sky background and rocking the camera, this provided close-ups to cut in with other shots of tiny model parachutes in full flight after being thrown from a bedroom window. The parachutes reach mother earth and a close-up follows showing the children struggling out of the enveloping folds of a sheet.

A dissolve was wanted here, but was too difficult. The camera was therefore tracked forward until the picture was filled with a confused mass of sheet, completely out of focus. The scene is changed. The camera now tracks back from a mass of sheet to disclose a sheet lying on the floor by the bedside, with the children struggling out of it, having just fallen out of bed. They climb back into bed again, rubbing their eyes and the film fades out to a finish.



Fig. 4.

Splicing with Tape

THERE is no film editor living who is clever enough to find the precise frame to cut at, every time; the job is essentially one of trial and error, and the important thing is to be able to make temporary splices quickly, to see the effect before making the final splice. For this purpose it is satisfactory to use a narrow strip of adhesive tape; ordinary "surgical" tape will do, but the transparent type is, of course, preferable. A strip one eighth of an inch wide, and of length equal to the film width, is adequate.

It is only necessary to line up the film and apply the piece of tape, taking care not to obstruct sprocket holes, and the joint is made. It will stand several passages through the projector, so long as care has been taken to apply the tape at the leading edge of the joint. The tape is best applied by means of a small pair of tweezers, and each piece can be used several times.

Those First Few Shots

MANY cinematographers seem to overlook the special importance of the first few shots of a film; yet it can safely be stated that every audience, however casual or blasé, always looks at the opening shots with particular attention and interest. It therefore follows that good opening shots will hold this attention, whereas a mediocre, insipid opening at once allows the attention to wander, and jeopardises the success of the whole film.

A strong opening is best contrived by infusing an element of speed or mystery into the shots, and above all by keeping off the beaten track of dull opening long-shots and/or boring titles. Thus a scenario which starts off with...

1. L.S. John meets Enid outside the coach booking office, and they enter ... can be improved to ...
1. (pan)M.S. John hurries ...
2. M.S. Enid looks round ...
3. M.S. John comes up to her, and
4. L.S. they enter the booking office ...

The first method is dull because nothing of interest happens: the booking office is obviously going to be entered and the preliminary meeting is anticipated from the moment the waiting girl is seen, hence it lacks interest: the second method, however, sets the audience thinking thus:—after shot 1, "Where's he going?"; shot 2—"Ah! to meet the girl"; shot 3—"Yes, I thought so; what next?"; shot 4—"Off by bus; where to?"—and so on. Thus examined, this second method is clearly far more lively and stimulating and interesting.

The surprise element is well illustrated by quoting the opening sequence of Harold Lloyd's 1923 production, "Safety Last."

de-in. TITLE. For him the sun had risen at Great Bend for the last time. Before him lay the long, long journey.

Fade-out.

2. Iris-in. C.S. Lloyd, looking forlorn, behind bars ... TRACK BACK TO ditto; girl-friend, mother and a Padre bid him sad farewell.
3. L.S. ditto; but we now see that they are on the platform of a railroad station ...

It will readily be agreed that this is an improvement on the hack method of starting with the banal title: *Off to try his luck in the Great City* ... followed directly by a L.S. of the folk bidding farewell on the station.

Coping With EXPOSURE PROBLEMS

Last month Mr. Alder carried the battle to the enemy by describing how to make an ingenious exposure calculator which only needed to be cut out of the pages of the magazine and mounted on card. Here he describes how exposure problems can be surmounted with its aid. Another helpful article next month.

By R. H. ALDER

IT is interesting to reflect that, but for projector deficiencies, there might be few exposure problems.

If the screen threw back light comparable with that of a midday scene in June sunlight, the pupil of each viewer's eye would be contracted to a tiny hole. Subject to certain modifications of materials and of projection procedure, daylight exposures could be made at a fixed stop of $f/6$ with a three-times filter. The denser image formed when the light waned would cause the pupil of the eye to open and it would be appreciated that the second scene was taken in duller weather than the first, but there would be no sense of loss of detail.

But the illumination of the screen at its best is more like December twilight and the eye is always working at full aperture, even on the brightest shots. Consequently, whenever the image becomes in the least dense, shadow detail is buried in Stygian darkness. To overcome this, the images of all dull scenes must be artificially lightened; this is achieved by increasing exposure in failing light.

Convention and Compromise

An appreciation of this convention that all shots must come to about the same average illumination on the screen is of enormous assistance in coping with exposure problems. Equally important is the understanding that, although a transparency can give a longer scale of contrast than any paper-surface print, even the screen, under ordinary projection conditions, has a limited range of visible contrast, and may not convey all the nuances that are visible to the eye.

The screen, then, gives a conventional translation—not reproduction—of the contrasts in the original subject. In any scene before the camera there are three kinds of contrast. One of these is lighting contrast, due to the fact that those parts of the subject which face the main source of illumination receive more light than other parts and are therefore able to reflect more to the lens.

A second kind is tone-contrast: even when the subject is uniformly lit, black materials reflect less light than white surfaces. Thirdly, there is colour contrast: surfaces may reflect the same intensity of light but of different colours, readily distinguished by the eye but not by panchromatic film.

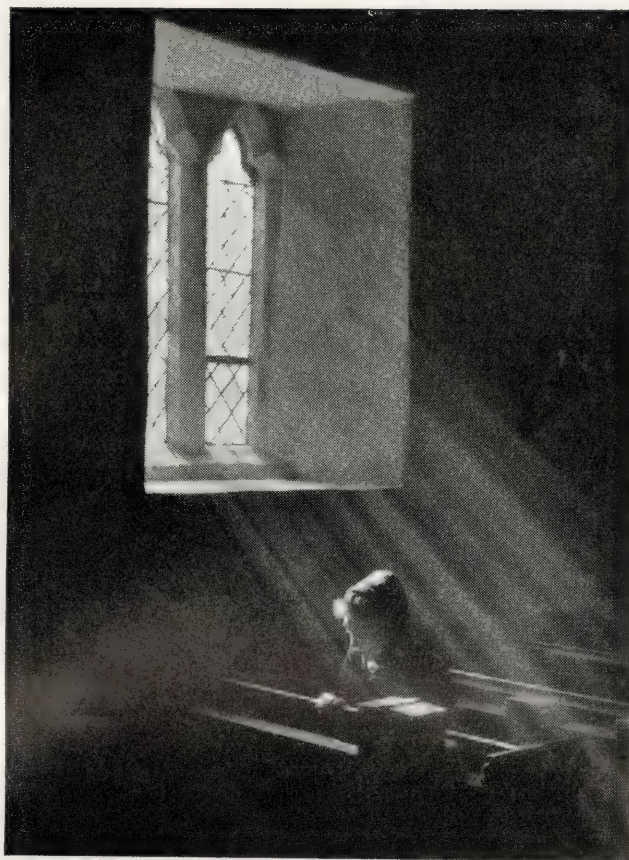


Fig. 1.—The eye, scanning the original scene, could see detail both in the windows and in the dark foreground. The exposure has to be nicely adjusted so that the highest lights are barely burnt out in order to preserve some middle-tone detail, but the deep shadows must be sacrificed.

The image on the film must form an amalgamation in black-and-white of these three visual impressions. Even when colour film is used it is necessary to see that colour contrast is not overcome by the other kinds of contrast.

Some Useful Approximations

Lighting contrast in an ordinary outdoor scene is possibly never much higher than six to one, even in bright sunshine; that is, surfaces facing the sun receive about six times the light which falls on surfaces facing in the opposite direction. In a Rembrandt interior, lit by a high, narrow window, the lighting contrast may be twenty to one.

Fig. 1 gives an example of the extreme of lighting contrast which may be met. It may be noticed that on an even face-tone the profile line, on the sunlit side, is absolutely burnt out, yet the shadow side of the face is scarcely lifted beyond a dark grey. The extreme contrast between the sunlit window-sill and the adjoining whitewashed wall is another proof of the difference in strength of the direct and reflected lights.

Considering next the question of tone-contrast, the extreme range (i.e., that between "white" and "black" reflecting surfaces under uniform illumination) lies between 25 to 1 and 50 to 1, but the ranges of tone-contrast commonly met in ordinary subjects are much

(Continued on next page)

lower and lie between 4 to 1 and 20 to 1. In Fig. 2, for instance, there is no truly black or white object and the tone-contrast, when lighting contrast is eliminated, is little more than 10 to 1 for the whole subject. A long-shot including only the distant landscape in the background of this picture would have a range of little more than six to one.

What Will the Projector Take ?

The acceptance of the human eye is considerably greater than any of the figures already given : in the absence of glare due to a large brilliant surface it probably exceeds 1,000 to 1. For instance, in the church interior of Fig. 1 the eye distinguished detail not only in the leaded window but also in the shadowed ends of the pews, dark in colour and ill-lit though they were. The question arises—how much of that visible range can be reproduced?

The maximum measurable range in normal reversal film is of the order of 100 to 1, but this maximum is seldom achieved under ordinary conditions : about 70 to 1 may be regarded as the working maximum. Unless the projector is exceptionally powerful or the screen extremely small this maximum is not likely to be appreciated by the eye—probably 50 to 1 is the largest visible range.

These figures give some idea of the problem, which is to keep the exposure such that the high-light-to-shadow ratio in the essential part of the image is cajoled into the fifty-to-one gamut of the film. Clearly, if the original subject has a narrow range of contrast of, say, 10 to 1, the exposure may vary considerably and yet give a “readable” image—whether that image will fit in with earlier and later shots is another matter.

For a fairly contrasty subject of 50 to 1 ratio there is only one correct exposure : on a still more contrasty shot one must decide whether to sacrifice high-light or shadow—they cannot both be adequately rendered in one shot, except by using special processing to juggle with the contrast gradient.

Cases in Point

It should be repeated that the figures given above are approximations taken from average cases, but they serve to show the magnitude of certain problems. Consider the case of an ash-blond in a black-and-gold swim-suit on a sunlit beach. The tone-contrast range is about 25 to 1. If the sun is behind the camera, the area of shadow seen is negligible ; for practical purposes

Coping With

(Continued from previous page)

tone-contrast is all that need be taken into account and the subject is one of medium contrast to be fitted into a 50 to 1 projector range. By giving barely sufficient exposure, detail in the light hair is preserved without entirely submerging the swim-suit.

Now let the camera move round the subject. More and more shadow comes into the picture and tone-contrast must be multiplied by lighting contrast. Since the sky is all open and the beach is a good reflector, lighting-contrast ratio is not more than three or four to one, but this brings the total range up to 75 or 100 to 1.

When the camera has reached a full *contre-jour* position, with the sun right behind the subject, all the interest lies in the shadow portion of the image. To bring this

detail into the visible range it is necessary to open up the lens a couple of stops, which means, of course, that the sunlit hair and skin are “burnt out” but the modelling of the black swim-suit just comes within the lower end of the tonal range of the image.

Effect of Distance

The foregoing example may seem extreme, but what of a distant sunlit scene such as a vista through an avenue of chestnuts? Here the tonal range of the original approaches the limit of the eye's acceptance and is frankly beyond the projector's limits. If the vista occupies a large portion of the frame the exposure must be that of a long-shot ; tree-trunks and foliage come out in a silhouette of dense

black. If the avenue itself is the main interest, a full exposure must be given and the distant view is lost. Obviously this is a case for two separate shots, one looking along the avenue and the other near its end, with the last trees merely framing the scene.

“A close-up should be exposed at one stop larger than a long-shot under the same conditions.”

This empiric conclusion from practice has provoked much controversy. Broadly, it is true. In a close-up the eye expects to penetrate further into the shadows and therefore some of the highest lights may, if necessary,



Fig. 2. A mid-shot in the scene, but much of the interest lies in the background. To prevent these from being washed out the exposure has been cut to that of a long-shot, with the result that detail is lost in the foreground shadows which, in this case, are of secondary import

Exposure Problems

be burnt out. But when lighting contrast is modified by the use of reflectors the rule goes by the board because the shot is not made "under the same conditions."

Indeed, a close-up is not necessarily the same subject. A long- or mid-shot including white clouds and dense shadows gives a wide range of contrast. A big close-up may cut out either or both. A head against a cloud-flecked sky needs no more exposure than a long-shot; the same head against a dark laurel may well demand a larger aperture because it contains no bright high-light but has considerable stretches of darks.

Common Sense and Commonplace

The examples cited lead to some general conclusions. First, for a subject of marked tone-contrast range under hard lighting the exposure must be based on the sacrifice of either the highest lights or the shadows. Generally (as in Fig. 1) it is the shadows that have to go.

A subject in which both lighting-contrast and tone-contrast are low offers more latitude. Here the subject may have full exposure, to give a "high-key" effect, or the aperture may be reduced to induce a mood of gloom. Canons of art demand a small accent—spot of white in the low-key or of black in the high-key; in determining whether the contrast range is wide or narrow these small areas may be ignored.

If there is any choice, it is clear that, to exploit the projector range to best advantage, exposures on a subject of wide tone-contrast should be made under conditions of low lighting-contrast, and vice-versa.

Finally—though this is by no means the last word on an intricate subject—the relation of exposure-determination to sequences must be kept in mind. When one



Fig. 3. Here is an enormous contrast range between the sunlit white gate and the shadowed dark tree-trunk. The main interest lies in the middle tones and therefore the exposure has been computed on this basis.

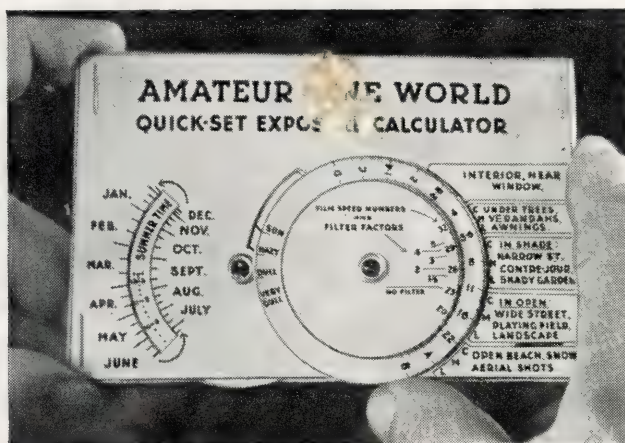
character moves through various surroundings there should be no sudden changes in the density of his image in successive shots. In this respect the high-light system of exposure-determination scores heavily: it brings the face-tones always to the same level.

That level, however, need not be the same from one sequence to another. If all the surroundings are dark it may be advantageous in that sequence to lighten the face-tones (increase the relative exposure) in order to bring out shadow detail: in another sequence, enacted before a whitewashed cottage wall, it may be permissible to depress the face-tones by cutting the exposure fine.

A word may be said about the application of these principles in the calculator described last month. The left-hand disc determines the strength of light available when the whole sky illuminates the subject. The broad sub-divisions on the right ("In the Shade," "In the Open," etc.), allow for the reduction in lighting when part of this illumination is cut off, as in the typical cases indicated under each heading.

The smaller sub-divisions of C, M and L are abbreviations for "Close," "Mid" and "Long." It would be more accurate to adopt the general descriptions: "Shots in which the highest light is relatively dark," "Shots in which there is a full tone-range" and "Shots in which there is no important dark area," respectively.

"Close," "Mid" and "Long" in most cases correspond with these descriptions, but the recollection of the full terms for which they are abbreviations will help in the occasional exceptions.



Here, ready assembled, is the Exposure Calculator described last month. Full instructions on its use were given. The application of the principles, discussed in the article here, in the Calculator, is dealt with in col. 2, this page.



Four Cameo Films

The shadows cast by the railings are as important to this shot as the railings themselves. With an empty foreground the picture would lose most of its interest.

APEX A.C.C. recently ran a competition for short films made by members; fourteen weeks were allowed for the making of the pictures, which were publicly shown and well received. The three that were voted the best they have sent us for review: "These Amateurs," by Frank Haywood; "One Man's Meat," by R. E. G. Copp; and "What a Life!" by Arthur Haywood. Two of them run to 150 ft.; the third is 100 ft.

Each has a clearly defined theme and in that lies much of their success. "What a Life!" is built round a situation which, on the face of it, does not appear very promising. It is merely a nicely observed record of a little girl of 4½ carrying out household chores like any housewife. Nothing much in that you say? But consider a moment. You have often seen—have probably made one yourself—films of small children playing at keeping house: washing the doll's clothes, manipulating a miniature mangle, taking afternoon tea with young friends, pushing a pram on an erratic promenade.

Make-Believe with a Difference

If they are well done, films of this type can be very pleasant little productions. The children are playing a familiar game of make-believe. But in "What a Life!" it is make-believe with a difference. The child is not playing with toys; she attempts real household tasks with brisk energy, apparently runs the house herself.

It is a whimsical situation—a new slant on an old idea. Through it she becomes a character, a colourful little personality. And she is a charming, grave-faced little person with a sudden, captivating smile.

Children often put on airs when they are playing games for the camera, and tiresome pests they are when they do. Our little heroine delights us because she does not appear to look on her role as a game at all; indeed, an understanding director would not, one feels, have much difficulty in

trying to ignore the clock which summons her to get up. This situation, slight though it is, sets the keynote for the film for, of course, no child of her age must obey the summons of a clock at an early hour. We see her hurriedly dressing and having some difficulty in getting a garment on the right way, and then hustling into the dining room with dust-pan and brush to clear away the depressing relics of last night's fire. Rightly enough, Mr. Haywood has not had her light another one.

Then there is furniture to dust and floors to clean. The mantelpiece presents a problem but she is able to reach it with a pair of steps. While she is diligently mopping up, the doorbell rings. The tradesman is not seen—the appearance of a grown-up would have been an intrusion—but a basket of groceries appears round the door. Of course, the telephone bell has to ring while she is on her hands and knees on the floor; but there are no exaggerated gestures of annoyance. She takes it all in her stride, gets to her feet without fuss and answers the 'phone.

Evening, and we see her in mother's bedroom, looking at herself in the dressing table mirror. But she does not preen herself and cluck. With the same calm, uncompromising deliberation with which she carried

out the household chores she examines her reflection in the glass, and if she finds it good, she gives no indication of the fact. To us it is quaint and amusing, for she is dressed in her party cloak and her hair is nicely done and she appears a very dignified little person indeed.

And although she is, permitted some tentative dabs with a powder puff, the director has set his face against loading her up with finery. A less understanding movie-maker would have had her carmine her lips, pencil her eyebrows, don, perhaps, a fantastic backless evening gown contrived out of mother's wardrobe, and enveloped her in one of mother's hats. That would have been very un-funny, just as shaming a dog by dressing him in doll's clothes and putting him in a doll's cradle is not funny. (Dogs, by the way, very much resent being guyed and laughed at in this way).

Dressed for a night out, our little lady lets herself out of the front door. Midnight and the door opens again. She switches on the light and goes up to bed. And that, unfortunately, is the end. Unfortunately, because there is no climax.

In a straightforward record of a day in the life of somebody, a definite climax is not perhaps so essential, although it is most desirable. But this film is not such a record, although the treatment is straightforward. It is, in effect, a little film play. The situation is too unreal (though entertaining) to permit us to accept it throughout at its face value. We therefore expect some sort of explanation or denouement at the end.

Evolving a Climax

Admittedly, a climax is not easy to contrive. One feels inclined to dismiss the obvious one—of the child waking up and finding it is all a dream—as being too hackneyed. On the other hand, if her mother is to be introduced into the picture at the end and, say, takes her up to the bathroom prior to going to bed, our grave little heroine is going to be stripped of her dignity as well as of her clothes. And since there can be no doubt that it is all make-believe, there is no point in underlining the fact at the end.

We suggest that the author co-opts a boy and girl of about nine or ten for the final sequences, which might run something as follows: Front door opens and our young lady tiptoes into the hall, does not switch on light but goes into lounge. 'Mother' (the girl of nine or so) is waiting up for her. She reproaches her 'daughter' for being out so late—no sub-titles should be necessary—and then says: "Better not let your father hear you go upstairs. He's been in a dreadful temper about your goings-on."

---By Appointment---

Amateur films of any size, subject and gauge may be sent for review. Those that reach a reasonable standard of merit are awarded a Leader. A special animated Leader is given for films that are particularly noteworthy. Please do not send us your film until we ask you to, but first advise us that you have a film you wish reviewed, stating its length and gauge. We will then reserve a date for screening it, and inform you accordingly. Please do not forget to enclose the cost of return postage with your film. Address: The Editor, "Amateur Cine World," 300/304, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Heroine goes out softly into the hall and reaches the foot of the stairs.

Cut to 'father' (the boy of ten) in bed. A sound disturbs him: perhaps his 'daughter' stumbles on a stair. He gets out of bed, puts on his slippers. Cut to 'daughter' taking off her shoes and creeping upstairs, shoes in hand. Cut to 'father' taking off one of his slippers, which he flourishes reflectively and advances towards the door. 'Daughter' innocently walking upstairs. The end.

This suggested ending does not, of course, bear very careful examination, for if the heroine was of the age she is purported to be, recriminations with an outraged parent should be a thing of the past, but perhaps we need not enquire too closely into this engaging little production. The cutting is very brisk, so that nowhere does the action lag, and the photography is good. A Leader has been awarded.

Homely Situation

"These Amateurs," by Frank Haywood, has a climax which is none-the-less effective for being expected. A young man sits reading a manual on photography. So absorbed is he that he continues reading at the tea-table, putting his tea cup in the jam dish and so on. Later he fishes out an old camera and examines the works carefully.

Next day he essays to put into effect the instructions so painstakingly assimilated. For tripod he uses a pair of garden steps, the camera placed on top of it. A friend stands woodenly some distance away, waiting to be photographed. With superb nonchalance the photographer tears off the wrappings of the film and exposes it to the light before loading it into the camera.

(Incidentally, his action is a pointed reflection on some instruction books—although not the one he was seen reading, for it is a first-rate manual—which omit to give basic facts probably because the author is himself so familiar with them that he forgets that others might not be. We well remember the aching sorrow with which we had to give up photography for a time because the chemicals cost more than our sixpence a week pocket-money. The instruction book hadn't said that the hypo could be used over and over again).

After many 'come hither,' 'go back a bit' and 'turn this way a little' gestures, our photographer gets the model in the desired position at the desired distance which, naturally, is much too far away for a portrait. Then all at once the model flings out his arm and lunges towards the audience for all the world as if he was going to attack them. Cut back to photographer who, after a second or so, steps backward in front of the steps, collides with them and brings the camera hurtling down.

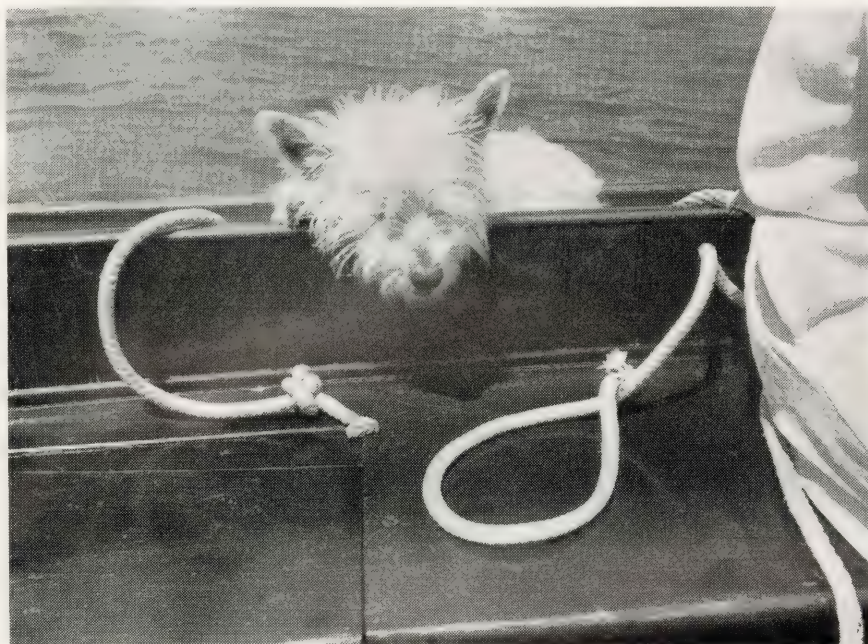
Cutting on Action

It is then that we realise that the model's extraordinary behaviour was intended as a warning to the photographer—before a warning could be needed. This is a case of faulty cutting on action, for the cameraman did not move back to disaster until after the model's violent signals. The first part of the shot of the photographer should therefore be cut so that, immediately after the warning, he is seen to be in imminent danger of colliding with the steps.

The camera is patched up with the aid of adhesive tape which the young man has

difficulty in getting off his fingers. Then he repairs to the kitchen to prepare the developing solutions. He is very careless in weighing up the chemicals and pouring the solutions into glasses, but not exaggeratedly slap-dash. We have seen amateurs guilty of similar behaviour.

When the hypo is dissolved it unexpectedly effervesces. He looks at the tin, which is labelled clearly enough, turns it round and then finds a piece of paper stuck on it with, in written characters, the name of a well-known proprietary health saline. This is amusing enough but, unlike the other incidents, it does not ring true.



The dog dislikes the water. Does he feel that hanging is the best way out? Be on the lookout for shots like this. They cannot, of course, be planned, so the amateur needs a quick eye and a ready finger. A film about a dog is reviewed on this page.

We can understand hypo finding its way into a salts tin, but who is going to throw away the latter and put the contents in a hypo tin? Better to have been content with the simple legend: 'Health salts,' which might be a home-made product in need of a tin, than specify a brand which comes in a tin of its own.

The developing is shown in close-up; had it been shown in medium shot the appearance of a dimly-lit darkness could not have been obtained, for inevitably the producer would have had to use more light. The negatives rapidly darken in the solution, of course, and there is not the ghost of an image on them, however anxiously our amateur examines them.

Next we see a small rubbish can. He steps up to it, drops in the negatives one by one and goes out of the picture. But he is back again in a second with the instruction book, which follows the negatives. The last scene shows him half hidden behind a child's comic which he is apparently reading. This, one feels, is too farcical a touch. We suggest that he is shown reading a book on, say, the making of model engines, barbola work, bee-keeping or some other hobby far removed from photography.

The merit of the film is its homely character; "that might be me" one thinks as one watches him being plagued time and again with beginners' troubles. So one laughs with, as well as at, him. It would have been so easy to spoil it all by extravagant situations such as part of the camera flying off when the shutter was released or the developing solution going up in smoke. But the author has kept within the not too well defined border that separates comedy from farce and has produced a very successful little film for which a Leader has been awarded.

The third film, "One Man's Meat," by R. E. G. Copp, is more original in conception

than the other two, but technically is less satisfactory. A dog laps up some beer spilled from a broken bottle, sees double and then, apparently assailed by conscience, runs like the wind to a "Drink More Beer" poster he had seen previously, runs off with it in his mouth, takes it into the garden, tears it to shreds and tries to bury the pieces.

The film opens too slowly: there is too much walking up and down. The first shot, for instance, is of a road in the distance; a man walking towards us. We have to wait, without any change of angle, until he comes close and then all he does is walk out of the picture. We are bored by having to wait so long and feel swindled because there proved to be precious little to wait for.

There are, of course, certain situations in which a shot can be effectively held for a considerable time, although the only action may be someone walking towards or away from the camera. An example of both types of action is to be found in two amateur films which have met with success: "The Miracle" and "The Red King," a picture made some years ago by the Regent A.F.S. But note that both shots come near the end of the film; in the case of the latter, indeed, it is the last shot.

(Continued on page 155)

A scene from the much discussed film, "Gone With the Wind," which is critically examined in this article.

I SAT and watched the screen from a comfortable seat in London's pleasantest cinema while four miles of film ground their weary way through the projectors. Upon that screen was lavished all that a film producer can buy with money. There was colour that was not only pleasing, but dramatic; colour that had been used with intelligence and artistry. This was supported by camerawork of the very highest class. There were sets and crowd scenes that would warm the heart of De Mille. There was acting that would be hard to criticise. From all points of view the producers had done their best, had stinted nothing at all to make this film good.

"Gone With the Wind" is the result, and I am heartily sorry that I cannot add that I enjoyed the film. Why all this should have been lavished on the life story of a Jezebel with apparently no single redeeming feature in her character, only Selznick International and the Great American Public who made the book something more than a best-seller can tell.

The technique of film production does not end with camerawork, direction or sound recording. And it is worth investigating why one film, which has the best of all these things, may be a bad film, while another, which has none of them, is good. I think that the answer, put into one word, is "action." Now action can be of more than one kind. Everyone can enjoy the sort of physical action which abounds in such films as "Robin Hood" or "Hell's Angels." But action can also be the interplay of ideas, with little or no physical action at all. Look at "Pygmalion," one of the most successful films of last year, and yet it consists entirely of talk. Look, if you like, at Dreyer's silent masterpiece, "La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc," where, deprived of speech, he still succeeded in putting over ideas with little physical action.

Background Too Subdued

That, I think, is where "Gone With the Wind" has failed. I am told that in the book the interest lies in the background of the South and of the Civil War, and that the characters are but a means of tying the book together. This is emphatically not so in the film, and there lies the mistake. An interesting film, even a great film could have been made about that civilisation which has now quite passed away. But instead we are asked to follow the career of an exceptionally unattractive girl, and the background is definitely kept in its place.

Only once does the background get the better of the characters—in the rather terrible scenes of the wounded brought back from the war, and of the desolation of the countryside that the war has caused. These scenes are not easily forgotten, more particularly in times like the present.

The film was directed by Victor Fleming,



The Longest Film Yet

. . . But "The Lord Was Not in the Wind"

Technical features of "Gone With the Wind," "The Shop Around the Corner" and "Pastor Hall."

By B. G. D. SALT

and at times one feels that he is not quite at home with it. Fleming is pre-eminently a director of action pictures, having among others "Captains Courageous" and "Treasure Island" to his credit. These long dialogue sequences scarcely seem his meat.

Mention should be made of the fire scenes, which are superbly staged. But the most unusual and impressive scene is where the refugees are fleeing from the blazing town. As they look back we see the whole sky red and angry, reflecting the fires below.

Striking Closing Shot

There is a particularly interesting scene which closes the whole picture, and which also occurs earlier. It is a long-shot of Tara on a hill in the distance, with the silhouette of a tree on a knoll in the foreground. From this the camera tracks slowly back.

The distant scene of Tara was a painted backing. As it was supposed to be so far away, naturally no camera movement should show on it, it being for all practical purposes at infinity (just as a distant hill remains stationary when viewed from a railway train, while trees in the neighbouring field move rapidly across the field of view). But in actual fact, being a backing, it was not far from the camera.

Consequently, when the camera started to track the problem rose as to how to alter the distance between the camera and the foreground without altering that between the camera and the background. The solution to the problem which was almost certainly employed was to build the foreground piece in the studio on a truck, and, keeping the camera still, to move this foreground away from the camera.

This, incidentally, is the method Walt Disney frequently uses to increase the

apparent distance between the various planes of his multiplane camera cranes. The chief criticism of the particular use of this technique in "Gone With the Wind" was the complete lack of any middle-distance. There was no ground visible between the foreground and the far distance, and the result was to make the foreground look rather like a moving model.

Some idea of the length to which the producers of this picture went in order to make it a masterpiece may be gathered when it is realised that every scene was sketched and painted on paper before the cameras started turning. William Cameron Menzies, who was production designer, produced more than three thousand sketches. It is to be doubted whether any production except for cartoons was ever worked out in such detail in the scripting stage before.

Business With Doors

"The Shop Around the Corner" is Lubitsch at his best, and yet as unpretentious a picture as you would find anywhere. Lubitsch gets no less fond of his doors as he gets older, although in this film there is no door sequence as such, but in place of it we find quite a large proportion of the action of the picture takes place round doors! We see the frustrated suicide of Mr. Mataschek only by seeing a smashed electric lamp through a half-open door; we are continually seeing customers coming and going from the little leather shop through the door; and several times we eavesdrop

(Continued on page 151)

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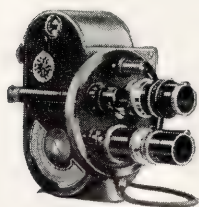
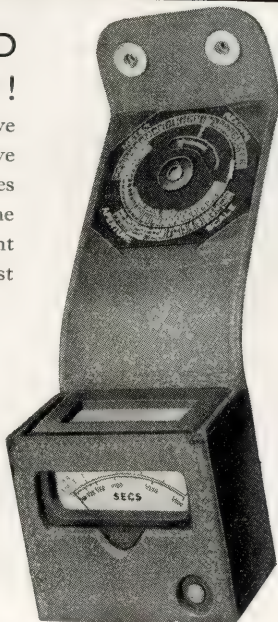
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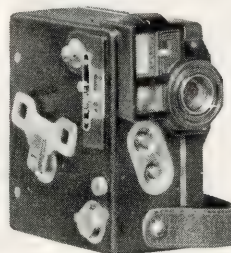
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"WALKING FURNITURE"

on the early morning chatter of the staff as they await Mr. Mataschek's arrival outside the shop door.

This film, straightforward as it is, is of interest technically in two ways. Firstly, it was shot in sequence. This is hardly ever possible in film production. As any amateur who has tried to make even a very modest film will know, it is generally necessary to start with a shot somewhere in the middle of the film, go on to the end, and probably finish with the first sequence. The main titles, of course, *always* come last—and generally when all the money available has been used up!

But "The Shop Around the Corner" takes place almost entirely on one set—the interior of the shop and the street outside. There are a few short sequences elsewhere, but nothing to speak of. Further, there are only half a dozen players throughout and only one crowd scene. Consequently there was nothing to prevent starting with scene 1 on the first day of shooting, and finishing with the last scene in the film, and this is what was done.

This method, where possible, is naturally a great help to everybody from the actors to the director and cameraman, and most of all to the continuity girl. Imagine trying to act the final close-up of a loving kiss when

you haven't even met the girl (or boy), let alone asked her to marry you!

The other technical point of interest which, like the first, is unnoticeable to the audience, is Lubitsch's "walking" furniture. As I mentioned before, almost the whole action takes place in a small leather shop, which is rather overcrowded with bric-a-brac. Lubitsch uses a trucking camera with considerable frequency and great fluency, and a blimped sound camera on a truck is no small affair. Not unnaturally truck shots were apt to be hampered by furniture getting in the way—furniture which had to be there because it was visible at some other time during the truck shot. So the property department produced some walking furniture, which conveniently walked out of the way of the camera truck, and back again when the truck had gone! It was done by an elaborate system of wires, and was so successful that it is impossible to detect it when seeing the film.

"Pastor Hall" is an unpretentious little English picture based on the story of Pastor Niemüller's experiences under the Nazi regime. It is an admirable little picture of great sincerity, and is a splendid example

colour combinations and in time you will instinctively choose the viewpoint and lighting to give colour harmony.

SOUND FILM PROJECTION

We regret that, owing to pressure on space, it has been necessary to hold over the latest article in this series; it deals with sound film programmes and will be published in our next issue.

Puzzle Corner

Here is the first of a series of problems arising out of recently released professional films. How were the special effects produced?

Q. In "Swiss Family Robinson" there occurs more than once a long shot of the island from a point out at sea. All the foreground to as far as the island is clearly real sea, real waves. But the island itself is equally obviously a rather badly painted picture. But yet the picture would appear to be a mile or two away across all the sea. How was it done? (Answer on page 156).



Shooting take numbers for a film being made by United Film Productions. Notice the elaborate camera.

of what can be done with an obviously very modest budget. (Amateurs who aspire to making pseudo Hollywood spectacles, please note!). The theme has been treated with unexpected restraint, and even the concentration camp scenes are no sadist parade of horrors.

The film opens with a model shot of a church belfry, and a technical device is used, previously used in many other films including Lubitsch's "Trouble in Paradise" but none-the-less worth repeating, to get from the model to a real set with no apparent break. The camera trucks away from the model belfry and down on to the side of the model church, until nothing but the wall is visible. When in this position we mix to an identical shot but shot on a full-sized set, and from this we truck back to reveal the remainder of the set. Cleverly disguised, the mix hardly shows.

Slow Truck Shot

The film contains what must be one of the slowest truck shots on record. It is a truck from medium close-up to close-up of Pastor Hall preaching, and in spite of the fact that the camera can't have moved more than a few feet, the shot, which is cut into three lengths, lasts for probably 50 or 60 feet. The actual camera motion is almost unnoticeable, but yet it gives a strong impression of urgency, which is just what is required, for the Pastor is preaching his last sermon and waiting for the Nazis to come and take him away.

It is worth mentioning that in the same programme as "The Shop Around the Corner" was a short called "William Tell," of no technical interest (for it was simply shots of an orchestra playing Rossini's overture) except in so far as it was directed by Frederick Feher. It is good to see that Feher still has his head above water after the financial fiasco (utterly undeserved) of "The Robber Symphony." But I wonder how many readers recognised the rather portly conductor of the orchestra as the Alan of the world famous classic "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari."

Painting with Colour Film

(Continued from page 138)

sunlit portions. This gives a much more satisfactory feeling of colour harmony to a picture.

So do not be afraid of filming in the shade—those soft, delicate and varying shades of blue, grey and green found in the shadows will provide an admirable foil to the small but relatively bright area of warm colour from a splash of sunlight.

Care should be taken in choosing the viewpoint to see that any bright accent colour is not on the edge of the picture. The eye will immediately fly to this colour, so it should be placed in a position that it will help the composition.

The novelty of colour film has led many amateurs in the past to seek out the brightest and most vivid colours for their shots. Vivid colour is not necessarily good colour and moreover shots which contain all bright colours are tiring to watch. Pick out scenes with the softer colourings—the pastel shades of greys, buffs, fawns, etc., and contrast these with a relatively small area of a bright colour and the result will be much more satisfying.

A colour sense is largely a matter of constant observation, so look out for pleasing

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INCREASING PROJECTOR LIGHT OUTPUT

D.H., Pinner.—The problem of increasing the light output from a projector is by no means an easy one to solve. Merely increasing the power of the lamp is not in any way a definite solution, since each of the optical components in the system has a bearing on the subject, i.e., the mirror, the size and intensity of the filament, its closeness to the mirror behind it and the condenser in front of it, the focal length and diameter of the condenser (points which obviously contribute to its light collecting powers—the angle which it embraces) and finally the projection lens itself.

We do not think that a motor-car head-lamp bulb is at all an ideal type of lamp, since the filament will of necessity be a long way from both the mirror and the condenser, because of the large diameter of the bulb. A proper tubular type projection lamp would be best, with, say, a small relatively short-focus mirror behind it and a short-focus condenser in front of it. Care will then have to be taken that the new projector lens is completely "filled" with light from the gate of the machine, if the whole system is to benefit by the changes made.

PROJECTOR FLICKER

J.A.B., Wellington.—The fact that you get flicker only when showing a comparatively small picture seems to indicate that you have far too much light on the screen. You could obviate this by cutting down the amount of light on your lamp, or by introducing a fixed stop or diaphragm into your projection lens.

FILM CEMENT FORMULA

F.J.O., Cambridge.—Take one part each of glacial acetic acid, acetic ether and amyl acetate. Your local chemist will make up the solution at the cost of a few pence. This cement will act for most types of film, including colour. You must remember not to leave the brush in the bottle, for the acetic acid would in time destroy the hair.

USING ORTHO AND SUPER-PAN

I have decided to use ortho stock more, not only on account of its cheapness, but also because results with super-pan have not always been satisfactory. For example, in close-ups of faces with this stock, lips hardly show at all. I still have a small quantity of super-pan, however, and wish to know if there is any means of including both stocks in the same film without the difference being too noticeable.—R.K.R., Newbury.

Filters are the answer to both your problems. A blue filter with super-pan would have given the lips due prominence in the close-ups and, while mixing stocks is not to be recommended, the discrepancy can be minimised to a certain extent by using a yellow filter with ortho film. For landscape shots with this stock, a yellow or green

These Tables will Help You to Make the Best Use of Your Lenses

(See page 139)

DEPTH OF FOCUS TABLES

(Note that fractions of inches are not given.)

No. 1. 12.5mm. focal length ($\frac{1}{2}$ ")

Focus set at distance	Lens stop: 1.9	2.8	3.5	5.6	8	11	16
1 ft.	almost nil.	11"—13"	11"—13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "—14"	10"—15"	9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "—16"	9"—19"
2 ft.	1' 10"—2' 2"	1' 9"—2' 4"	1' 8"—2' 6"	1' 6"—2' 7"	1' 5"—3'	1' 3"—4' 2"	1'—6"
3 ft.	2' 10"—3' 8"	2' 6"—4'	2' 3"—4' 4"	2'—5'	1' 8"—8'	1' 7"—16'	1' 6"—inf.
6 ft.	5'—9'	4' 3"—11'	4'—13'	3'—27'	2' 6"—inf.	2' 5"—inf.	1' 9"—inf.
10 ft.	6'—17'	5' 6"—30'	5'—180'	4'—inf.	3'—inf.	2' 6"—inf.	2'—inf.
infinity	20'—inf.	14'—inf.	10'—inf.	7'—inf.	5'—inf.	3' 6"—inf.	2' 6"—inf.

No. 2. 25mm. focal length (1")

Focus set at distance	Lens stop: 1.9	2.8	3.5	5.6	8	11	16
2 ft.	1' 11"—2' 1"	1' 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "—2' 2"	1' 10"—2' 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	1' 9"—2' 4"	1' 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "—2' 5"	1' 8"—2' 6"	1' 7"—2' 10"
3 ft.	2' 10"—3' 2"	2' 9"—3' 4"	2' 8"—3' 6"	2' 7"—3' 9"	2' 6"—4' 2"	2' 5"—4' 4"	2' 3"—5' 2"
6 ft.	5' 4"—7'	5'—7' 6"	4' 10"—8' 5"	4' 4"—10'	3' 10"—14'	3' 6"—16'	3'—inf.
10 ft.	8'—13'	7' 6"—15'	7'—18'	6'—30'	5'—inf.	4' 6"—inf.	4'—inf.
infinity	50'—inf.	33'—inf.	25'—inf.	17'—inf.	12'—inf.	8'—inf.	6'—inf.

No. 3. 50mm. focal length (2")

Focus set at distance	Lens stop: 3.5	5.6	8	11	16
5 ft.	4' 8"—5' 4"	4' 6"—5' 6"	4' 4"—5' 10"	4' 2"—6' 2"	3' 10"—7'
10 ft.	8' 10"—11' 4"	8' 4"—12' 6"	7' 10"—14"	6' 6"—16' 6"	6' 4"—23'
17 ft. (5m.)	14'—21'	13'—25'	12'—34'	10'—50'	8' 6"—300'
infinity	80'—inf.	50'—inf.	35'—inf.	25'—inf.	18'—inf.

No. 4. 75mm. focal length (3")

Focus set at distance	Lens stop: 4.5	5.6	8	11	16
4 ft.	3' 11"—4' 1"	3' 11"—4' 1"	3' 10"—4' 2"	3' 10"—4' 2"	3' 9"—4' 3"
5 ft.	4' 10"—5' 2"	4' 10"—5' 2"	4' 9"—5' 3"	4' 8"—5' 4"	4' 7"—5' 6"
10 ft.	9' 6"—10' 7"	9' 4"—10' 9"	9' 1"—11'	8' 10"—11' 6"	8' 4"—12' 6"
25 ft.	22'—29'	21'—31'	22'—34'	19'—39'	16' 6"—52'
50 ft.	39'—70'	37'—80'	33'—105'	29'—185'	24'—inf.
infinity	167'—inf.	134'—inf.	94'—inf.	68'—inf.	47'—inf.

A lens with focussing mount can easily be used as a "fixed-focus" if so desired. One merely sets the focus to that distance which will best secure sharp area stretching

from as near a point as possible to infinity. This distance is called the "hyperfocal distance." The following table gives you the necessary figures.

Table No. 5. Hyperfocal distances

Focal length.	Set lens at stop:	1.9	2.8	3.5	5.6	8	11	16
12.5mm.		8'	6'	5'	4'	2' 6"	2'	
20mm.		20'	15'	12'	8'	5'	4'	2' 6"
25mm.		30'	20'	16'	12'	8'	6'	4'
50mm.		120'	90'	50'	40'	30'	20'	15'

The picture will be sharp from half the distances given here to infinity.

Since the focussing scales of the lenses

are not calibrated at all the required distances, we have to set them as near to the values as possible, taking the engraved marks as guides.

WERE YOU RIGHT? ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S QUESTIONS

(1) It does not converge the light rays, but diverges them.

(2) A short-focus lens is more strongly curved, thus bending the rays in a more acute angle.

(3) Two, four and eight times as much.

(4) On a nearby object, because the depth of focus is smaller.

(5) Less depth of focus.

filter should certainly be used in any case, otherwise the greens will be reproduced as a muddy dark grey. Cloud effects on ortho can be obtained with a yellow or orange filter.

REDUCER

M.F., Bristol.—The cheapest reducer for cine films is as follows:—

Potassium permanganate, 1 dram.

Sulphuric acid "concentrated," 30 drops.

Water to make 10 oz.

Add the acid slowly to the water before dissolving the permanganate. About 2 mins. immersion should be enough, but this time can be slowed down by the addition of more water in order to give greater control.

BUILDING A SPOTLIGHT

S.S., Birmingham.—We regret that complete instructions for the making of any type

of spot-light would be beyond the scope of an enquiry. A description of a simple mirror spot-light, employing a Kandem stippled-mirror (obtainable from Messrs. Kandem, Ltd., of 711, Fulham Road, London, S.W.6.) about 8 ins. in diameter and a Photoflood bulb was given in *Amateur Cine World*, March, 1936, page 549, by Stanley W. Bowler. The ordinary bull's-eye type of green-glass condenser is not very efficient, as it absorbs a fair amount of light.

For use with a condenser type spot-light it is better to use a projection-type bulb, such as the Class A.1 type as manufactured specially for this sort of work by most lamp-makers. A more efficient type of condenser-lens for spot-light work is the "Fresnel" lens, which can be obtained from Messrs. Holophane Limited, Elverton Street, Westminster, London, S.W.1.

Amateurs Re-create the Past

In our May issue, reference was made to the opportunities for amateurs to make historical films for educational purposes. This article tells how the Planet Amateur Film Society planned the making of "The Great Plague," and indicates the vast amount of preliminary work involved.

By

HUGH BADDELEY and
L. F. MINTER

IT was while chatting with a schoolmaster after one of our shows that we learned of the shortage of authentic historical films for teaching purposes. Most of those in the substandard libraries which supply schools were originally produced to entertain the adult public and are neither accurate in story nor suitable technically.

An example of the somewhat unfortunate effect that these films sometimes have on the child mind is illustrated by the fact that mention in the classroom of Henry VIII, as likely as not provokes the children to indulge in erudition and throw imaginary bones over their shoulders in emulation of Charles Laughton's famous character study. One child in particular, when asked to write an essay after being shown "Tudor Rose" on the school projector, gave up referring to Lady Jane Grey after the first few lines, and frankly called her Nova Pilbeam.

The producers of these films, considering as they must box-office appeal, do not bother about the psychological effect upon the easily impressed child. It becomes obvious, therefore, that films for schools must be specially made, both from the point of view of technical treatment and accuracy in detail. The professional, however, could not produce films involving many scenes and characters exclusively for such a small market, but the amateur, since it is not his livelihood, is neither tied to a time schedule nor dependent upon the financial return.

Reversing Usual Procedure

As we were searching for a new story to put into production, we asked a schoolmaster whether he thought a society such as ours had sufficient resources for making a film which would be useful in this direction. Upon being whole-heartedly assured on this point, we decided that in making an historical film we would reverse the procedure adopted hitherto, where the producers have offered the schoolteacher a finished film without consulting him first about his requirements, and would place ourselves in the hands of the educational authorities to produce a film on a subject they wanted and in the way they wanted.

It so happened that our schoolmaster acquaintance was Head of a nearby county school, who enlisted the aid of his history master. This latter suggested the great



Planet's art director at work on models for a seventeenth century London street. He made scale drawings for each building, and even with the help of three other members, actual construction stretched over several weeks.

Plague of London as our subject; not only would it provide an excellent social background, but, in addition to the technicians, many members would be required to fill the acting parts. We were surprised at the eagerness with which the project was accepted by the whole club, so without further delay a start was made on the necessary research—a great task.

The master assembled all the points he considered should be illustrated, and incorporated them in a first rough theme. It was his plan first to have a complete story into which the points of educational value could be woven, for a story type of film is more likely to hold the interest of children than a straight documentary. Secondly, he avoided trying to portray any famous historical characters but to concentrate on the ordinary man in the street; not only is it extremely difficult to enact a well-known character convincingly, but—as is often pointed out by teachers—the lives of millions of ordinary people had a far greater influence on social development than did the antics of any particular nobleman. He emphasised the fact that a film alone cannot adequately teach—rather should it be used to illustrate and impress a given lesson.

Individual Research

A rough filmic treatment was next outlined by the club production committee which included a director, cameraman, art director and a member responsible for costumes. During the time occupied in submitting this rough script to other history teachers, revising it where necessary, and preparing a final shooting script, these committee members were each able to delve into their own individual research, the work being divided up as follows:

The cameraman, accompanied by the director and a third member who had assisted with the script, spent several week-ends touring in search of suitable buildings of the period to satisfy themselves that background material was available. This provided a large number of stock shots for cutting into various parts of the film later, and also assisted the art director in designing the model street of eight buildings, complete with cobbled roadway, on which work was started at once.

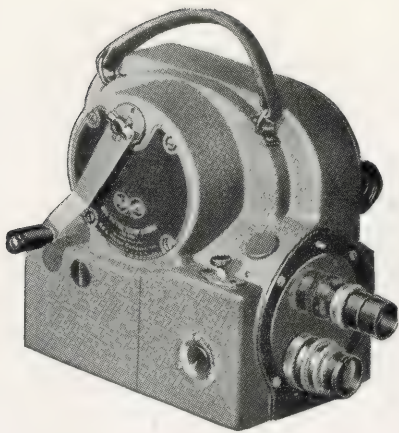
The art director planned interior sets from prints appearing in reliable books on the times, and sketches for the costumes, also authentic, were prepared.

Finally, the costumes department prepared a few specimens, procured some suitable wigs, and tests were made of all members interested in acting parts. In selecting the cast, factors other than acting ability had to be kept in mind, consideration being given to the age and occupations of the men, suitability in particular types and enthusiasm of the persons concerned, because of the necessity of keeping to a very full time-table. Quite a large part was given to a child, in order to gain the sympathy of the juvenile audience.

Special 'Props'

While all this preparation was going on, the club was completing a previous production. By the time this was finished and the studio cleared for the commencement of the historical film, three months' work had provided all the models required, many of the special 'props,' such as hams, barrels of apples, household utensils, furniture and other items (including a stuffed crocodile), a tested and selected cast, designs for all sets, sketches for, and some completed, costumes, the twenty-page script in course of duplication, and five copies of a 'breakdown' script, each scene running to twenty-five pages, giving details of each scene.

Over all these activities hovered the eagle eye of the history master. His experience in planning stage shows proved extremely useful, and he was very soon visualising the possibilities and difficulties of amateur film production. It was his task to see that every detail of the film was authentic. Just as he had turned out one or two of the early stock shots of buildings because a tree could be seen (there apparently were few trees in the London of that period) or because the paving, window leading, drainpipes or chimneys had been altered since the building was originally constructed, and just as he had made minor alterations to the rough script to ensure accuracy, so during actual filming he will examine every set, every background shot, every costume, every property and even the shape of the lady players' eyebrows!



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Round the Societies

THREE members of the **Planet A.F.S.** (Hon. Sec.: H. Roger Dale, 72, Wellington Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield, Middlesex) who journeyed forth with a camera and tripod a few weeks ago to photograph buildings in various parts of the country for an educational documentary, "Domestic Architecture," found that most of the buildings they wanted were in restricted military areas, with the result that their plans had to be hurriedly revised.

They compromised, however, by making a short of the beautiful Wye Valley, constructing the film around the famous Tintern Abbey, where delightful weather and skies presented ideal conditions. Even with this innocent subject, the village policeman received seven complaints in one morning from local inhabitants who had visions of fifth column activities.

"Imps' Playground" (16mm. reversal) is another fictional documentary, this time illustrating the dangers of driving carelessly through districts where children play in the streets. Commencing in a humorous vein and ending with the reproduction of a striking poster specially supplied by the Pedestrians' Association, all signs of propaganda are reserved for the last few feet.

Interior sequences are now being photographed for "The Great Plague" (2 reels, 16mm., neg.-pos.). Details of this film are given in the article on the previous page.

Recent club meetings have included a lecture by member Eric Freeman on "Musical Accompaniment for Films," illustrated by several types of 'mood' music from his vast collection of records, about which he was able to point out such astonishing things as, for example, where a bow was dropped during one particular recording.

* * *

"Your Humble Servant," 1938 I.A.C. plaque winner and "Wright Good Pals," club competition winner, 1939, are among the films offered for hire or exchange by the Hyde C.S. (Hon. Sec.: E. A. Schoolden, "Edenhurst," 200, Dowson Road, Hyde). The list also includes several A.C.W. Leader films. Rate of hire is 2s. 6d. per reel, plus postage.

A shooting script is in preparation for a film tentatively titled, "Books and Cooks," the central theme of which is the public library. Members who have been called to the Forces have been made honorary members for the duration. Several shooting outings—at which readers will be welcome—have been arranged.

* * *

It is good to be able to welcome a new club in these times. **Luxor Films** is the name; they are already actively engaged in the preparation of two films: For the first, "Strange Tactics," a one reel Kodachrome puppet film, special apparatus is being constructed, while viewing professional films of this type and compiling data are occupying the unit. The Hon. Sec., Aylwood Dares, 106, Hodford Road, Golders Green, N.W.11., would be glad to hear from readers who would be willing to pass on any knowledge they may have of this work. The second film, to be kept at the script stage until

Reports and stills for the September issue of "Amateur Cine World" should reach us not later than July 29th.

"Strange Tactics" is in production, will dramatise the life of a young man about to join the army.

The puppet film is being made within half-a-minute's walk of Golders Green Tube Station. A postcard to the Hon. Sec. will bring full details and visitors are assured of a cordial reception. Luxor Films have their own projection theatre, equipped with two triple-gauge projectors, and the lease of a large studio is contemplated when shooting begins on the second production.

* * *

The first fine week-end in June provided the **Watford A.C.C.** with the opportunity to start work on their slapstick comedy, "Not in These Trousers." In spite of the late arrival of some of the national service workers and the early arrival of a thunderstorm, production is nearly up to schedule.

The action takes place mainly out of doors; the story was written by one of the members with this end in view, partly for economy's sake and partly because the studio is over-run by "The Trumped Ace" unit, who are hastening to complete their production before military service steals the hero or a villain or two.

The club usually meets on a Wednesday, but the need for fitting in times with A.R.P. workers' duty hours has necessitated changing the day on one or two occasions, so visitors are advised to ascertain which night the club will be meeting, so as to avoid disappointment.

* * *

Because the plot required that half of the cast should be dressed in Nazi uniforms, **United Film Productions** have had to shelve their film, "Adventure for Two." The Ministry of Information suggested that regrettable misunderstandings might have resulted with the L.D.V. Another script has already been written and is ready for filming. (Publicity Sec.: D. Densham, 5, Madrid Road, Barnes, S.W.13).

* * *

Subscriptions are now being accepted at the rate of 2s. per month by the **Sale and Stretford F.S.** Like many other societies, they are steadily losing members to the Forces, but are managing to keep the studio going and continue with film production. (Hon. Sec.: A. Ball, 38, Sandford Road, Sale Moor, Cheshire).

* * *

A commentary is to be produced by the **Crouch End A.C.S.** to overcome continuity difficulties with their film of the zoos at Regents Park and Whipsnade. The documentary unit shot 200 ft. of 9.5mm. for this picture. The drama, "Holiday" (9.5mm.) is now in production under the assistant director who took charge because the director had to relinquish the job on account of national service claims. Good progress is being made. (Hon. Sec.: S. D. Newman, 66, Crouch End Hill, Crouch End, N.8).

Readers' Films Reviewed

(Continued from page 147)

Many readers will remember that shot in "The Miracle" in which the woman approaches the shrine of the virgin. The shrine is in the foreground and through an avenue of tall trees the woman slowly approaches. The action is slow, to accord with the mood of the scene; there is an air of poignant inevitability about it. We are not unduly conscious that the shot is held on for very much longer than is usual.

The closing scenes of "The Red King" show a charcoal burner discovering the dead body of Rufus in the New Forest. He drags the corpse into a rude cart and, with bowed head, pulls it along. The scene is held, without change of angle, from the time he comes into the picture until, little more than a speck, he disappears down a long lane. Here, too, is poignancy, the last long, low chord of a sombre piece of music. One is not impatient for it to end. To have cut it off short would have brought us back to earth with too much of a bump.

Too Deliberate

Both these films are dramas, but "One Man's Meat" is a comedy short. It should begin briskly. Let us get down to business at once and begin with a close shot of the "Beer is Best" poster. A shadow falls across it; the smaller shadow of a dog follows the larger one, but while the man moves on, the dog stops and surveys the poster. Cut to dog looking towards camera. Cut to man who turns round, whistles her, notes her intent gaze and smiles a little.

In the film the man stops and reads the poster; one can almost see him making up his mind, with unhurried deliberation, to take home a bottle of beer. There is more walking about and next he is seen carrying one and when he gets to his house and his wife opens the door, a great deal is made of that bottle. We appreciate that the author was at pains to establish its importance to the plot, but the treatment is too studied. Surely it does not need a poster to remind one that one is thirsty or that one intends to buy some liquor next day.

Camera Trick Gala

No, it was a false move to have the man study the poster and cart the bottle home with almost ostentatious display. It is enough that the dog should evince an interest in it. The bottle is dropped and its contents lie in a pool in the garden path. (This shot is held on too long, by the way). The dog laps it up. When her mistress appears at the door again to summon her in, she sees two mistresses; and that, apparently, is the sum of the physical effects of the liquor on the animal.

The author missed an opportunity here for amusing camera tricks. The ground could have rocked, master's head could have become detached from his shoulders while his legs made unsuccessful attempts to catch up with it, he could have appeared and disappeared with astonishing rapidity, the cat could have run with incredible verve backwards... there was endless scope for giving the camera its head—and the author would have had the satisfaction of knowing

that, although such a sequence would be patently a parade of trick effects, it would have been entirely in place in the film.

One brief manifestation *à l'ouïe* of double image would not, one feels, be sufficient to arouse remorse in dog or man. One would have liked, too, to have seen her looking very sorry for herself. As it is, after her fleeting aberration she runs indoors, there is a fade out and the next we see of her she is running out of the door and along the road, to tear down the poster.

While the film is sufficiently well put together to merit a Leader, the theme would well repay a few re-takes and additional shots.

Familiar Things

Each of the films discussed above deals with familiar things; very little acting was called for. The characters had only to be themselves; they did not have to express emotions it is unlikely they had ever felt or find themselves confronted by situations outside the limits of their experience. The picture we next screened was also a short film play: "The Dream" (8mm., 80 ft.), by Leonard Reeve. Technically it is no whit less inferior to the best of the Apex films; there is imaginative lighting and good camera-work, but it lacks conviction because one can believe in neither the characters nor the situations.

Each of the three players in it is under twenty-one. Two are cast as middle-aged people and the other is an elderly butler. If ever you are tempted to film a story with a butler in it, we say, with George Robey, desist! The hoary retainer grown white in the service of the family does not look at home in small rooms. The young elderly butler in "The Dream" bears heavy lines on his forehead, but they suggest less the wrinkles of age than the need for a wash. His bowed head sits ill on young shoulders.

The Blood-Stained Book

After being attended by the faithful retainer the youthful middle-aged master starts to read a book, after a good deal of fidgety business of lighting a pipe. He turns a page and finds bloodstains, exclaiming: "That's strange... only three finger marks..." But surely the strange thing is that there should be bloodstains on the page at all. He falls asleep.

1900. A lady reading the same book by candlelight in artificial light. (There should have been heavy shadows in this scene). In it she finds a letter which says that there is treasure in a chest in the attic; and thither she departs. A man—we see only his legs—follows her upstairs. She bends over the chest. Shadow of the man, dagger in hand. After some wavering, he strikes. Her hand falls across the page of the book she has brought with her, smearing it with blood. The murderer's arm is tautly outstretched.

1940. The butler comes back into the room with a decanter, pours out whisky. Master awakes, notes butler's outstretched arm. His mind immediately flashes back to the hand of the murderer and to the

(Continued on next page)

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TITLING

Personal. 9.5mm. Titles—Threepence. "Effects." Discount; Latest List. Evans, Cine-publicity, Dereham, Norfolk.

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salient scenes of the crime. He looks at the butler doubtfully. The end.

Now that is a good ending. It leaves the audience something to think about. If the same restraint had been exercised in the treatment of the rest of the plot, it would have been more convincing. But the producers hopelessly handicapped themselves by choosing a story which called for older, seasoned players, a background of reasonable opulence which they found difficult to sustain and a plot which called for a high degree of acting skill to carry off successfully.

Yet technicians and players have talent. Some of the scenes are very effective. We should like them to tackle a simple theme (such as those of the Apex films), for "The Dream" gives evidence that they would make a very good job of work of it—a job that would give far more satisfaction in the result than the present film. It's fun, of course, to act in and produce dramatic episodes, but when you get down to it you find that there is just as much enjoyment to be gained from evolving a film with a homely background.

Points from Letters

Reader's views are welcomed for these pages but the Editor does not necessarily agree with the opinions expressed.

I WONDER how many readers noticed, from two recent contributions to A.C.W., the striking confirmation of the fact that clever direction and editing can suggest acting ability of a high order from inexperienced players? In last month's issue Mr. Basil Reynolds writes: "I think Ace Movies have got a real treasure in the young lady who played the star role. She is almost a second Elizabeth Bergner."

In the previous issue Mr. Ben Carleton, the director, stated that she had had no previous experience of film acting and "to make the part as easy as possible for her I so prepared the treatment to eliminate as much as practicable anything calling for high emotional capabilities." One agrees with him that "in the circumstances she did a pretty good job of work," but I feel that one should also recognise the part played by the director. **Liverpool. JACK FIRMSTONE.**

USE OF COLOUR FILM

IN their criticisms of the "Ten Best" films, two readers say that in their view it was a waste of colour to have used it for "Our Daily Bread," but that its use was justified for the exteriors. I think that this point of view is fundamentally wrong, implying as it does that colour should be used for the sake of colour. It is this attitude of mind that is responsible for large numbers of irrelevant close-ups of flowers in holiday films. We have had colour film long enough now to realise that the 'colourful' scene is not always satisfactorily captured on film and that it is the more delicate hues that give the best results. **Nottingham. P. D. MORLEY.**

ONE MAN PRESENTATION

MOST articles on projection stress that, if the films are to be put over in a professional-like manner, with accompaniment on gramophone records, etc., the operator must have an assistant. You may be interested to know that a friend of mine who is the fortunate possessor of two 16mm. sound projectors (bought secondhand they together cost but little more than the price of one new machine) gives regular fortnightly shows at which he is solely responsible for the projection, managing the change-overs so neatly that it is very seldom that a break is noticeable.

Both projectors are very carefully lined up beforehand, of course, and he always runs the films through before the show to familiarise himself with the cue-marks. Incidentally, it is worth noting that immediately after the conclusion of the programme it is his inflexible rule to pack up the films ready for despatch next morning.

I myself have a silent projector and manage with some success to improvise a musical accompaniment via the gramophone (one turntable) without any assistance. I find that the short break that occurs during change-over of records is not particularly noticeable and after a time comes to be accepted by the audience. This is probably because the records are invariably played right through, so that the audience is subconsciously aware when the end is being reached and is therefore not unduly critical of the break.

I am aware that this make-shift method falls far short of the pukka one that employs twin-turntables and a large number of records from which selected passages only are played, but it is definitely better than no accompaniment at all. Those readers who have hesitated to work gramophone as well as projector, through fear that one or both will suffer, can be recommended to have a shot at it. I am sure that they will be agreeably surprised. **Uxbridge. C. A. LEIGH.**

MOONLIGHT EFFECTS

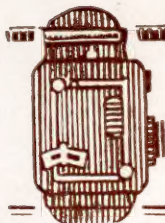
IN a reply to a reader in the June issue you suggest producing moonlight effects through the use of a deep orange or red filter on supersensitive pan. film. I would like to suggest that staining the film lavender might also be considered; I have found it to give a very satisfactory effect. For night scenes I prefer not to use a red filter, but merely under-expose, with a diffusion disc in front of the lens to prevent the scene from being too sharply rendered. **Dulwich. F. J. BASSETT.**

Did You Guess?

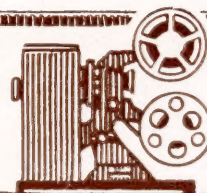
(Answer to Puzzle on page 151)

A "glass" shot. A large sheet of glass is placed between the camera and the sea, and on this the island is painted. The camera is on the beach, pointing out to sea, probably on a rostrum in order to avoid photographing the breakers in the foreground. The glass would be reasonably near the camera, but far enough away to be in focus.

The glass covers the whole picture area, so that no edge shows, but whereas the upper portion has the island painted on it, the lower portion is clear, and through it the waves of the sea are visible. Consequently, although the island was only a few feet from the camera, it appeared a couple of miles away on the far side of the waves.



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